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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0990
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STATE FOR NEA/PD, NEA/ARP
INFO NSC FOR ABRAMS, DOD/OSD FOR SCHENKER AND MATHENY
LONDON FOR ARAB MEDIA OFFICE
DUBAI FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY HUB
CENTCOM FWD FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAO QA

SUBJECT: AL JAZEERA TURNS TEN

¶1. Al Jazeera celebrated its 10th Anniversary November 1 with a lavish celebration held in the open-air on the Al Jazeera compound in Doha. The event was attended by the Qatari Amir and his wife, Sheikha Moza, as well as a wide range of Qatari dignitaries and members of the diplomatic community, including Ambassador, DCM, and PAO.

¶2. Al Jazeera used the occasion to unveil a memorial wall listing the names of more than 630 journalists killed and imprisoned throughout the world, including some Al Jazeera staffers. Al Jazeera clearly spent a significant sum on the celebration, which included a performance of a symphony composed for the event by Lebanese musician Marcel Khalifa. The choral work, entitled "Elegy for the Orient," was performed in the Italian city of Piacenza by the Italian Philharmonic Orchestra and was beamed live to Doha, where guests watched the performance on giant outdoor screens.

¶3. The musical performance was preceded by a precis of Al Jazeera's ten-year history, given by two of the channel's presenters, including dramatic clips, predominantly of Al Jazeera's war and conflict coverage. Speeches followed by Al Jazeera Board Chairman Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani and Wadah Khanfar, Director-General of the overall Al Jazeera Network and Managing Director of the Arabic channel.

¶4. Neither speech contained any surprises - both congratulated the Amir, Qatar, Al Jazeera staffers and the Arab world in general on the occasion of the 10th anniversary. Khanfar reiterated familiar themes - such as the unique edge in Middle Eastern coverage given Al Jazeera by its location in the heart of the region; its role in educating and liberating the average Arab listener; and the challenges and resistance the channel has faced. Khanfar recognized the families of Al Jazeera reporters who have been either killed in the line of duty (correspondent Tareq Ayoub), or detained (reporter Tayseer Alouni, now under house arrest in Spain after being convicted of collaborating with a terrorist group; and cameraman Sami Al Hajj, detained since 2001 in Guantanamo Bay). (Note: Alouni appeared during the proceedings in a taped statement in which he thanked his supporters, congratulated Al Jazeera and encouraged fellow journalists. End note.)

¶5. Khanfar also referred to the upcoming November 15 launch of the English-language Al Jazeera International and the network's plans to launch a pan-Arab newspaper (septel reporting on both topics).

¶6. The anniversary received wide local and regional press coverage in both news and commentary sections, with the tone primarily

congratulatory of the channel and of the Amir for supporting it.

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